

who sought explanations of things in a
light and
scoffing spirit which concealed a
natural distrust
of authority, and whose later moods of
cloudy
mysticism were the result of inward
broodings
upon his own destiny. His
correspondence with
Ibn-Sabin, a Moslem savant of Ceuta,
—the
famous "Sicilian questions,"—are
couched in a
characteristic half-mocking, half-serious
vein;
one
of the least irreverent of his questions
which sought
to find what truth there was in Islam
is that
which asks what becomes of the houris
who re-
ward the faithful in Paradise when they
become
old, Frederick was one of those whose
temper-
ament forbids them to believe: he had
the spirit
of "a jesting Pilate." His gibes and
epigrams
are part of his art of government; thus
he punishes
the rebel people of Bari by having
inscribed above
their gates a Latin rhyme of his own
which is
to be a permanent memorial of their
faithlessness.
This polyglot genius, who spoke or
understood
Latin, Italian, German, French, Greek,
and Arabic,
was first and last an Italian patriot
whose heart
was in the sunny kingdom of the south,
who
wondered that God, who might have
chosen
Apulia for the Promised Land, should

choose the
sterile and burning plains of
Palestine. He was
a poet who made verses in the native
Sicilian
speech; he is to Dante "one of the
fathers of
Italian song," the patron of a company
of Trou-
badours who made Palermo a second
capital of
Romance poesy, The grandson of the
chivalrous